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THE CONSTITUTION AS IT IS.

S P E E C H

OF

HON. E. R. REYNOLDS,

OF NEW YORK,

Delivered in the House of Representatives, February 18, 1861.

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three—

Mr. EDWIN R. REYNOLDS said :

Mr. SPEAKER: Having had but little experience in legislative assemblies, I have hesitated long before asking the attention of the House to my views on the present unhappy and alarming condition of our public affairs. But I feel, sir, that, in a time of general disturbance and commotion like this revolutionary epoch through which we are now passing, no one, however humble or obscure, is to be pardoned for neglecting to contribute his mite toward a proper elucidation of the weighty questions under discussion, looking to a speedy, safe, and satisfactory adjustment of our national difficulties.

And, on the threshold, I am met by a peculiar difficulty. There appears, sir, to have arisen an ugly controversy in our midst, which has not only divided and disrupted the Republic of Washington, but has kindled the lurid and baleful fires of domestic insurrection and of civil war in more than one locality of our fair and hitherto peaceful and most highly-favored land.

I seem, sir, to have been listening, for two months past, to powerful efforts of argument and oratory on all sides of this House, and in the other branch of Congress, to satisfy the country that the extension of slavery in the Territories, and its protection everywhere under the authority of the national flag, was the first and paramount constitutional duty of the United States Government; or that such protection and extension is uncalled for and unconstitutional. I seem to have heard of the secession

of at least six of the States of this Confederacy on account of our failure to comply with the demands, and to do the behests of this institution of human bondage; and I have all along innocently supposed that the question of the protection of slavery by the National Government, or of its being confined to and protected only by the several States wherein it exists by force of local law, was the great, foremost, prominent, serious, and all-absorbing question of the hour; and that upon its speedy, conciliatory, and just solution, hung the very destinies of the Republic for all coming time. Judge, then, sir, what was my surprise on hearing it said, but a day or two since, by the very distinguished Senator from New York, that "the matter is disposed of; the people have gravely and deliberately determined against slavery extension, and it is no longer a practical question."

Sir, I am surprised, bewildered, dumbfounded. Do my senses serve me? Is this perilous commotion really attributable to some other cause than the agitation for and against slavery extension? Have not South Carolina and Georgia, and Alabama and Louisiana, and Florida and Texas, openly seceded from the Confederation on this account, and on this account only? And do not several other States hang trembling in the balance? Have not our forts and vessels been seized, our arsenals invaded, and our mints robbed, by men and States in arms, justifying themselves only on the ground that the Republican party has come into power on the avowed sentiment of hostility to the further extension and legalization of slavery?

Has not our flag been fired into, our mails been rifled and intercepted, our commerce on the Mississippi obstructed, for the same ostensible cause? Is not the public mind to-day, North and South, convulsed, as never before in the whole history of the Union, in this mighty subject? On what other point did the recent elections turn in Virginia and in Tennessee? What else crowds the bursting columns of the daily and weekly journals wherever published? Ay, sir, what other topic now feeds the thunders of the London *Times*, or attracts more undivided attention from Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, and from the ministry of Louis Napoleon and other European Governments, than this? And yet, "it is no longer a practical question!"

With all deference to superior wisdom and experience, I cannot, for one, acquiesce in this conclusion. Sir, we cannot overlook primary causes and impelling motives, if we would. Not by covering up, or in any way ignoring the laws of nature; not by closing our eyes and saying the sun no longer shines; not by stopping our ears and imagining that sound no longer exists, can we overturn or avoid the consequences of the vivifying potential laws and agents, the great existing facts of the universe around us.

Nor can we successfully cope with the most difficult political problem of modern times by pretending to exclude the primary propelling moral forces and opinions which underlie the whole subject-matter. *Non sic tantis compoere lites*. No, sir; not thus can this tremendous crisis be successfully treated; not thus can the spirit of disorder, insurrection, and rebellion, be successfully quieted or subdued. Have we yet to learn, in this advanced day of high culture and civilization, that the world is moved by ideas, and by ideas alone? If so, we have read history to little purpose. The voice of reason, the monitions of conscience, the teachings of ordinary prudence and common sense, as well as the highest considerations of public safety, all alike loudly demand that this irritating, disturbing, perpetually-recurring question of questions, should be put to rest, finally and forever. How, sir, shall it be done? Following, then, the example of all around me, as well as the dictates of my own judgment, I shall continue to regard the present and prospective legal *status* of African slavery

on this continent as the mighty problem to be solved before peace, quiet, and permanent happiness and general prosperity can be restored to the American people, and the dark and gloomy portents of the times can be dissipated.

We are met, *in limine*, with various ingenious propositions calculated, at least in the minds of their authors, to settle our difficulties. Almost every man has his specific, his nostrum, his cataplasm, his life pills, or some other empirical emollient for the occasion. But, sir, in my humble judgment, all such temporizing expedients and prescriptions are worse than useless. Utterly vain and illusory is it to dream of effecting a cure for the suffering body-politic, in these last convulsive and deadly throes of imminent dissolution, without going at once to the inmost root of the disease.

Mr. Speaker, there are precisely two methods, and only two, of healing this raging disorder that is crazing the brain and consuming the body of the State and nation. One course is to go on, as the Administration has so far been doing, yielding to the threats and insulting demands of the armed traitors, who openly avow their fixed resolution to finally break up and destroy our Government, and our free institutions as well; submit to the robbery of your mails, of your mints, of your arsenals, of your ships; cringe and shrink like cowards under the attacks on your flag, the hitherto glorious and invincible stars and stripes, at the bare sight of which, always heretofore, the heart of every American has leaped up with an irrepressible impulse of pride and loyalty, but which now seems to be dishonored and retreating before the attack of every contemptible mob which chooses to flout and insult it. Incorporate your new guaranties in favor of slavery into the Constitution; suppress free speech; muzzle your free press; chain up your free pulpits; pass your sedition laws; give your slaveholders' court the power of sending a citizen into another State to be tried by a court and jury foreign to him, for the crime of having written, or spoken, or printed, words that may be construed by that foreign court or jury to have been *intended* to be incendiary; do all this at the bidding of King Cotton, and, as we have been graciously told, a part of the slaveholding States may deign to "take into consideration what they will do." I will admit that it is not impossible, if you will do all that,

that even the Gulf States might be coaxed back to assume the reins of Government over us: though I suppose we may fairly take their word when they say they will never come back into any sort of fellowship with free States. In a speech before the late State Convention, in Alabama, Mr. Yancey said:

"Mr. President, I avow myself as utterly, unalterably opposed to any and all plans of reconstructing a Union with the Black Republican States of the North. No new guaranties, no amendments of the Constitution, no peaceful resolutions, no repeal of offensive laws, can offer to me any, the least, inducement to reconstruct our relations with the non-slaveholding States. This opinion is not founded on any objection to a confederation with States north of Mason and Dixon's line, on principles mutually agreeable to them; but it is founded on the conviction that the disease which preys on the vitals of the Federal Union does not emanate from any defect in the Federal Constitution, but from a deeper source—the hearts, heads, and consciences of the Northern people. They are educated to believe slavery to be a religious as well as a political wrong."

Mr. Jefferson Davis also says, the day for compromise is past. He will have no conciliation. He will have us "smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel." They spurn your concessions. They despise your friendship. They will have no reconstruction. Ah! sir, when all this is done, there will be no more free States to be anxious about their liberties. Then, do all this, and "order will again reign in Warsaw."

STAND BY THE CONSTITUTION AS IT IS.

Sir, there is another method by which a settlement may be secured, and which, I must say, I altogether prefer; and that is, in short, to support and stand by the present Constitution and the present Union, and secure the enforcement of the laws as they are. Why should we alter or amend the Constitution? Have we not lived for seventy years or more under its provisions, as framed by the fathers; prospered beyond all the nations of the world; all the time making such progress in the arts of peace, in commerce, in husbandry, in mechanics, in manufactures, in public education, in civil and religious liberty, as has been a prodigious marvel, not only in our own eyes, but in those of the whole habitable globe? And shall we have the rash temerity, in fright, in haste, under the pressure of menace, to undertake to amend it? To fumble and tinker with its time-honored pro-

visions? To lay our hasty hands upon the ark of the covenant which has guided us so long safely and happily through the arid wilderness of party strife, of extraordinary expansion of territory, of pro-slavery fanaticism, of Democratic corruption and misrule, and of piratical filibustering upon unoffending sister Republics? Does it not seem the part of wisdom—admitting the necessity of some alterations in the fundamental law of the land, at the proper time, and in the proper manner—that these should be sought and obtained deliberately and with great caution, scrupulously conforming to the method prescribed in the present Constitution itself for its own alteration? Let us do nothing precipitately and without all due deliberation. Let us be perfectly certain in the first place, that the people really desire a change in the Constitution; and secondly, that there is a reasonable probability of a concurrence of three-fourths of the States in the projected amendments. In a matter of this immense consequence to the welfare of the present and of future generations of our vast, outspread, majestic empire, certainly, if ever, should be followed the scriptural injunction, "let all things be done decently and in order." Any congressional compromise that could be produced at this session must necessarily be hasty, immature, crude, and imperfect, and would fall short of meeting the conditions of the present emergency; for we have noted in vain the events and discussions of the time, if we are not satisfied that the secession fever will run its appointed course with entire disregard of what may or can be done by this Congress, and even of the recorded opinions of mankind in respect to its wisdom or its folly.

Again, sir, the people did not elect gentlemen here to change the Constitution. They expected no such thing of us. They did not anticipate any state of things which would render such a proceeding necessary or judicious. To do it, then, would clearly seem to be a superfluous overstepping of our legitimate functions. If the Constitution must be changed, let the people do it. Let them elect men especially commissioned for the purpose. So shall it be done in accordance with their judgment and wishes, and in some reasonable degree of compliance with the due proprieties and decorum properly connected with so grave and consequential a procedure. Sir, I am opposed to all

congressional changes in the Constitution, whatever.

THE CRITTENDEN COMPROMISE.

We are asked to adopt the Crittenden amendments, or some compromise substantially amounting to the same thing. What are these Crittenden resolutions, about which we hear so much said? I reply: *they are the Breckinridge and Lane platform incorporated into the Constitution of the United States.* We are called upon to do what even the Douglas Democracy refused only last April to do at Charleston; to consent to even more than the Charleston seceders then thought of demanding. In order to make this plain at a glance, I will read, in connection, first, the three chief articles of the Breckinridge platform, and then the main proposition of the Crittenden compromise:

Breckinridge Platform.

1. That the Government of a Territory organized by an act of Congress, is provisional and temporary, and during its existence, all citizens of the United States have an equal right to settle with their property in the Territory, without their rights either of person or property being destroyed or impaired by Congressional or territorial legislation.

2. That it is the duty of the Federal Government, in all its departments, to protect, when necessary, the rights of persons and property in the Territories, and wherever else its constitutional authority extends.

3. That when the settlers in a Territory having an adequate population, form a State Constitution in pursuance of law, the right of sovereignty commences, and, being consummated by admission into the Union, they stand on an equal footing with the people of other States, and the State thus organized ought to be admitted into the Federal Union, with their Constitution prohibited or recognized as the institution of slavery.

Crittenden Compromise.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives, that the following article be proposed and submitted as an amendment to the Constitution, which shall be valid, as part of the Constitution, when ratified by the Conventions of three-fourths of the people of the States:

First. In all the Territories now or hereafter acquired north of latitude 36° 30', slavery or involuntary servitude, except for the punishment of crime, is prohibited; while in the territory south of that latitude, slavery is hereby recognized as existing, and shall not be interfered with by Congress, but shall be protected as property by all departments of the territorial government during its continuance. All the territory north or south of said line, within such boundaries as Congress may prescribe, when it contains a population necessary for a member of Congress, with a republican form of government, shall be admitted into the Union on an equality with the original States, with or without slavery. The Constitution of the State shall prescribe.

for new recognitions, new safe-guards, new guaranties. Why should it? What is it that asks this new protection? Let its own courts answer. I take no Northern anti slavery definitions; but go to its own records. In the case of *Neal vs. Farmer*, (9 Georgia Reports,) the court decided, that if there was no statute prohibiting it, it was not a crime to kill:

"Licensed to hold slave property, the Georgia planter held the slave as a chattel; and whence did he derive title? Either directly from the slave trader, or from those who held under him, and he from the slave captor in Africa. The property in the slave in the planter became, thus, just the property of the original captor. In the absence of any statutory limitation on that property, he holds it as unqualifiedly as the first proprietor held it, and his title and the extent of his property were sanctioned by the usage of nations which had grown into law. There is no sensible account to be given of property in slaves here but this. What were, then, the rights of the African chief in the slave which he had captured in war? *The slave was his to sell, or to give, or to kill.*"

Again: the North Carolina supreme court, in the case of the *State vs. Mann*, (2 Devereux's Reports, page 268.) Mann was indicted for wounding a slave woman; and the question was, whether a man could assault a negro. There was no statute punishing it, and the question was, does the common law protect the slave? The opinion was delivered by Judge Rutin. He says:

"Slavery has indeed been assimilated at the bar to the other domestic relations, and arguments drawn from the well-established principles which confer and restrain the authority of the parent over the child, the tutor over the pupil, the master over the apprentice, have been pressed on us. The court does not recognise their application. There is no likeness between the cases. They are in opposition to each other, and there is an impassable gulf between them. The difference is that which exists between freedom and slavery, and a greater cannot be imagined. In the one, the end in view is the happiness of the youth, born to equal rights with that governor on whom the duty devolves of training the young to usefulness, in a station which he is afterward to assume among freemen. To such an end, and with such an object, moral and intellectual instruction seem the natural means; and, for the most part, they are found to suffice. Moderate force is superadded only to make the others effectual. If that fail, it is better to leave the party to his own headstrong passions and the ultimate correction of the law, than to allow it to be immoderately inflicted by a private person. With slavery it is far otherwise. The end is the profit of the master, his security and the public safety; the subject, one doomed, in his own person and his posterity, to

Sir, it would be shameful, dishonorable, disgraceful, suicidal, for Republicans to listen for moment to these propositions. They can never receive the assent of the people of the North, much less of the Republican party. Slavery requires further and greater guaranties than Washington, Madison, and Jefferson, were willing to give it. It will have additional protection, or it will dissolve the Union! It asserts itself to be a wise, humane, just, and beneficent institution. It will not be let alone. It will thrust itself upon us with loud demands

live without knowledge, and without the capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits. What moral considerations shall be addressed to such a being, to convince him of what it is impossible but that the most stupid must feel and know can never be true—that he is thus to labor upon a principle of natural duty, or for the sake of his own personal happiness? Such services can only be expected from one who has no will of his own; who surrenders his will in implicit obedience to that of another. Such obedience is the consequence only of uncontrolled authority over the body. There is nothing else which can operate to produce the effect. The power of the master must be absolute, to render the submission of the slave perfect.

"I most freely confess my sense of the harshness of this proposition; I feel it as deeply as any man can. And as a principle of moral right, every person in his retirement must repudiate it. But in the actual condition of things it must be so. There is no remedy. This discipline belongs to the state of slavery. They cannot be disunited without abrogating at once the rights of the master, and absolving the slave from his subjection. It constitutes the curse of slavery to both the bond and free portions of our population. But it is inherent in the relation of master and slave.

"That there may be particular instances of cruelty and barbarity, where in conscience the law might properly interfere, is most probable. The difficulty is to determine where a court may properly begin. Merely in the abstract it may well be asked, which power of the master accords with right? The answer will probably sweep away all of them. But we cannot look at the matter in that light. The truth is, that we are forbidden to enter upon a train of general reasoning upon the subject. We cannot allow the right of the master to be brought into discussion in the courts of justice. The slave, to remain a slave, must be made sensible that there is no appeal from his master; that his power is in no instance usurped; but is conferred by the laws of man, at least, if not by the laws of God.

"I repeat, that I would have gladly avoided this ungrateful question. But being brought to it, the court is compelled to declare, that while slavery exists among us in its present state, or until it shall seem fit to the Legislature to interpose express enactments to the contrary, it will be the imperative duty of the judges to recognise the full dominion of the owner over the slave, except where the exercise of it is forbidden by statute. And this we do upon the ground that this dominion is essential to the value of slaves as property, to the security of the master and the public tranquillity, greatly dependent upon their subordination, and in fine, as most effectually securing the general protection and comfort of the slaves themselves."

Shall such an institution be extended? Shall it have new securities, new guaranties? Let the American people, let the whole world of

mankind answer. Do you expect the Republicans to abandon and belie every principle they ever professed and maintained? to eat their own words and oft-avowed opinions, and effectually demean and stultify themselves by consenting to what the majority of the late Democratic party refuse to agree to—its delegates at Baltimore even accepting the division and dissolution of their party instead? Those who look for any such thing will find themselves eminently mistaken. They will be first among those who, here or elsewhere, in this controversy, are busying themselves—to use the figure of the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts—in "gathering wool from goats." It should be enough, on this head, for me to say, that had Mr. Breckinridge been elected, four months ago, the whole Republican party would have regarded such a result as a most disheartening defeat and an overwhelming calamity. Would it be less so now? By no means. It would be a victory more brilliant than our enemies ever dared to hope for, and our triumph at the late election a defeat more terrible than was ever feared as possible. No, sir; even the threat of civil war, and of a dissolution of this Union, cannot drive us to so utter and shameless an abandonment of all our principles, consistency, and honor.

And here, sir, I wish to allude to some sentiments, most remarkable in my judgment, recently uttered in this House by the honorable gentleman from Virginia, [Mr. DE JARNETTE.] I quote them as the expression from what I suppose to be a large class of those Southern gentlemen who are looking forward to the establishment of a great slaveholding empire. I wish to give them prominence, that my constituents, who are accustomed to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, may see the sort of Democratic feast to which they are invited; that our hard-working farmers and mechanics, who are accustomed to honor labor, may behold in a clear light the exclusive and aristocratic philosophy upon which the leaders of the so-called Democratic party proceed in advocating their political system. Methinks it will be a surprise for our independent yeomanry to know that they are regarded in the light of slaves to capital, or to anything else; that they have among them the worst form of despotism, or even any despotism at all; that free labor has destroyed the prerogatives of

justice, or invaded the sanctity of God's altar, or that it is in any danger of returning to barbarism:

"I have known, Mr. Speaker, for ten years, that dissolution must come. I have seen the irrepressible conflict between labor and capital at the North, and known that it could but result in favor of the former, inasmuch as that labor possessed the revolutionary power there, to wit: the elective franchise. Wherever, sir, there is free competition between labor and capital, and that labor is armed with the unrestricted right to vote, the labor being always in the majority, must sooner or later so control the law-making power as to hold the capital subject to its will. That labor has, for many years past, controlled the law-making power of New England. It has now gained control of the law-making power in many States west of the Hudson; and in the last Presidential contest, it aspired to, and obtained, the control of the law-making power of this Government. Wherever there is free competition of labor and capital, and that labor vindicates its power to control the Government, liberty cannot long survive. But the worst form of despotism will exist as long as there is capital left on which it can feed. When this fails, the only result which can follow is, for such a people to return to barbarism.

"Thus, society at the North is now pregnant with the seeds of its own destruction. Its only salvation is a stronger Government, and a restriction of the elective franchise. This is not speculative theory, but fact; it is not wild imaginings, but his cry.

"It is the free suffrage and free labor of the North which now controls the press, the bar, the schools, and the pulpit. It is the free labor of the North which has invaded the sanctity of God's altar, and compelled its ministers to acknowledge its divinity by dethroning Jehovah and worshipping Beezzebub. It is the free labor at the North which has invaded the highest judicial tribunal of justice, destroying its prerogatives, and teaching men to despise its decrees. Sir, it has so shattered the framework of society, that society itself exists only in an inverted order at the North. Capital at the North for a long time waged an unequal contest with labor. It looked then to the Government, and found that impotent for aid. For momentary security, it seemed to sympathize in the objects of the States, and to point to the institutions of the South as fit objects for attack. A fatal delusion! They not only introduced the Trojan horse into their counting-houses, but drove away their best customers by their efforts to enslave them.

"At the South, our new republic will have no such element of disorder. Capital there owns all labor which, from its nature, so lowers the man as to make him unfit for society and self-government. Thus capital and labor, in our new republic, will work in beautiful harmony; and it is thus that African slavery furnishes

the only basis upon which republican liberty can be preserved."

Sir, if such sentiments as these are really entertained to any extent by our Southern brethren, it affords us a key to this frenzy of the times, which is tearing them from their ancient moorings of attachment and loyalty to the Republic. At the same time it is lamentable to see the foundations of a new State attempted to be laid upon a philosophy so utterly at variance with the teachings of history, the truest instincts of humanity, and the monitions of conscience, which is the stern monitor of God within us. And I must be permitted to add, such notions, however sincerely entertained, as I have no doubt they are, are erroneous in fact, erroneous in theory, and erroneous in application. Free labor at the North has *not* shattered the framework of society. Society at the North is *not* threatened with destruction. Its salvation is *not* in a stronger Government, nor in any restriction of the elective franchise. Quite the reverse holds true. It cannot be successfully denied, however, that our whole system of free-labor, democratic institutions, is founded upon diametrically opposite ideas of the philosophy and utility of government to those put forth by the gentleman from Virginia. And I bless God that it is so! Long may it so remain!

BORDER STATES COMPROMISE.

The border States compromise is next urged upon our attention. That this is but another treacherous, time-serving, and most futile and fruitless proposition, is perfectly apparent to my mind from the following considerations:

1. The first article of these proposed amendments provides that Congress shall have no power to legislate in regard to slavery in any places in which it now has exclusive jurisdiction without the consent of the States which had made the cession of such places to the United States. It is very generally conceded and I entertain no doubt on the point, that Congress now has actually the exclusive right of jurisdiction in all such places. We are therefore, asked to take away from Congress what little power it now has over the subject and some press this course on us as a certain and speedy panacea for all our difficulties. But, sir, I differ from all such *in toto et in parte*. Instead of abrogating any right or power we now possess to rid ourselves of this unspeakable

curse, I would rather exercise that power by abolishing slavery in the arsenals and dockyards forthwith, and in this District, as soon as the inhabitants here should give their consent; and thus put this terribly disturbing question at once beyond further cavil.

2. This second article offers us the old line of 36° 30', in this respect being identical with the Crittenden compromise.

It is enough, sir, on this point, for me to say that this question is already settled, recently settled; and, as I believe, finally settled by the people themselves. At the last election, eighteen States, by overwhelming and astounding majorities, decided that they would not accept this article; but rather that Congress should pass laws to prohibit slavery forever in all of the Territories of the United States. Do gentlemen expect the people to change their verdict? Let them try it. But never was a more fallacious expectation entertained.

3. The third article is offered as a pretended concession to freedom. For what purpose? As a cheat, as a blind, to deceive Northern men with an idea that you make a show of fairness; that you give us a little something in this matter in appearance, while in reality you take all. The Constitution already does all it can to suppress the African slave trade; and it is either a cheat or a gross blunder to talk of putting in again a provision for that purpose.

4. The fourth article prohibits Congress from interfering with the domestic slave trade. Sir, I would rather, if there is any doubt on the subject, propose an amendment to the Constitution that Congress shall have the power to utterly extinguish that nefarious and accursed traffic. If this is not one of the kinds of commerce between the States that Congress has the power of regulating, it certainly should be. I can never consent to part with it.

5. We are next called upon to insert in the Constitution a provision denying to Congress the right to meddle with slavery in the States. It might be sufficient to say to this that it is entirely unnecessary and superfluous, inasmuch as it has never been pretended by anybody that Congress has any such power. And I think, sir, it is not too much to expect that, if Southern gentlemen will not believe us now, when we disavow any such intention, they will not do it even if we put it in the Constitution. It is true that John Quincy Adams thought that, in case

the General Government should be called on to suppress a servile insurrection, the power of doing so must necessarily be somewhere implied in the Constitution, and would involve control of the whole subject. Now, if gentlemen would consent, also, to amend that instrument so as to relieve us of the duty of suppressing domestic violence in any case where there is an attempt on the part of the slaves to recover their freedom by force, then I have no objection to voting for this alteration. But, seriously, I suppose it is, or might be, in certain not improbable events, of the last importance for Congress to retain all the power they have over the subject.

6. The last provision, proposing that no territory shall be acquired without the consent of three-fourths of the Senate, means nothing—might easily be avoided and made nugatory; and whenever the necessities for more slave territory demanded, it would require but little ingenuity on the part of the propagandists to set it entirely aside.

I think, then, we may say the border-States proposition is pretty much disposed of—partly as meaning nothing, and partly as being impossible to be complied with.

As it regards the question of admitting New Mexico as a State, there are several objections to my mind. Its lack of population, and the constitutional difficulty of carving it into future smaller States, as is intended, are barriers that it seems to me ought not to be surmounted. Besides, it amounts to nothing. Our Southern friends spurn the offer. You say that there are but a dozen slaves there, all told, and that God and nature forbid there should ever be any more. Then, why and how can it be a propitiatory offering to slavery? I am not surprised that they reject it as unsatisfactory. Most evidently there can be no advantage in it to slavery, unless, in some way, it provides for the perpetual establishment of human bondage in all territory hereafter to be acquired. In any case, I cannot vote for the admission of New Mexico under its present laws and boundaries, and with its present atrocious white slave code unrepealed.

REASONABLE COMPROMISES.

But, Mr. Speaker, not wishing to be outdone in making offers of compromise, I respectfully propose the following:

1. For all persons in arms against the Government, or who are plotting its overthrow, to

abandon their rebellion and their treason, restore the national fortresses, mints, vessels, coin, arsenals, and hospitals, and other public property they have appropriated to feed the slaveholders' insurrection.

2. To allow Mr. Lincoln to take quiet and peaceable possession of the administration of the Government, and for all the people North and South to cheerfully and cordially aid him in the enforcement of the laws and the protection of our flag.

3. To give complete protection to the persons and property of all Northern men visiting and temporarily residing in the slaveholding States, and especially to save Northern men from hanging for no other crime than being ministers and missionaries of the Gospel.

4. For Congress to abolish slavery in all the dock-yards, arsenals, and other places where it has the right and jurisdiction to do so, and in this District, when the inhabitants shall desire it.

When these compromises are conceded and agreed on, I think we may have peace on the slavery question.

SECESSION—WHAT IS IT?

Peaceable secession! What is it? Is it attainable? Is it permissible?

Mr. Speaker, these are questions of the very gravest character. In their correct solution is clearly involved the happy and peaceful, or the troubled and bloody, future. We are confronted with armed and defiant rebellion; for, sir, disguise it as you please, befog it, gloss it over a thousand times, and try never so hard to change its real character by giving it a harmless name, still we may be sure that no such thing as peaceable secession is possible. That this is the belief and conviction of the insurgents themselves, is evident from all their words and

proceedings, and from the unconcealed fact that the Southern Confederacy is raising and equipping a large military force. No, sir; the sooner the American people make up their minds to meet the crisis as it is, in its plain and terrible aspect, so much the better. The sooner we change the vacillating, cowardly, disgraceful, if not traitorous, policy of the outgoing Administration, the better.

Let us know, first of all, whether our Government is a FACT or a FICTION. Let us no longer be a laughing-stock to ourselves and to the rest of mankind for our ridiculously contemptible hesitation in meeting and treating armed treason and rebellion as it richly deserves.

FINALLY, STAND FIRM.

All that the friends of freedom and equal rights have to do in this crisis is to stand firm by their faith, gather round and uphold the good old Constitution of our fathers, and loyally defend the Union they established. It seems to me that our duty is very plain.

We are asked to make new laws. I answer, there are too many already. Let the present laws be enforced. Amend the Constitution? Let the people do it in the regular way, whenever they think it desirable. I shall not object. No, sir; obey the Constitution, and administer the laws as they are, and all will be well. Stand by the Union of our fathers. Rally under the glorious folds of the stars and stripes; AND THE COUNTRY WILL BE SAVED. And for the rest, let us "trust in God, and keep our powder dry."

"Stand for the right, 'mid the gloom and the sorrow,
That hangs lowering over the prospect to-day;
For the truth will shine brighter and clearer to-morrow,
While darkness and doubt shall be driven away.
Stand, as the rock, old Plymouth, is standing,
Though lashed by the fury of ocean so long;
'Twas a foothold most firm to the pilgrim on landing,
And stands for his children, now equally strong."

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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